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Hatch gypsy in plea to Blair

A GYPSY from Hatch was among a group of travellers who visited the home of the Prime Minister this week.

The Trans-European Roma Federation delegation handed letters in at No. 10 Downing Street to highlight the plight of gypsies suffering persecution in Europe and the planned eviction of travellers from Woodside Caravan Park.

Clifford Codona joined Dr Boris Muntyanu, of the Odessa Regional Roma Congress of Ukraine; MP Bob Russell; Roza Kotowicz of the Roma Support Group; Grattan Puxon of the Federation; Veerendra Rishi of the Indian Institute of Romani Studies and gypsy Toma Nikolaeff to hand a letter to representatives of Tony Blair asking for discussions about the future and rights of gypsies in this country and across Europe, including those seeking asylum here.

It read: 'In the present political climate, we have become the scapegoats of right wing extremists in all parts of Europe.

'We urge you to take on board the fact that it is as futile and inhuman to deport Roma as it is to allow local authorities to move on travellers who have nowhere secure to live.

'As a first step we are asking you to allow a small number of Roma leaders actively engaged in combating human rights abuses in their 'home' countries to stay in the UK.'

One member of the group, Mr Nikolaeff was forced to flee his Bulgarian home after finding a bomb on his doorstep.

Mr Codona, a resident of the Woodside Caravan Park which is currently fighting eviction action by Mid Bedfordshire District Council, also handed in a letter offering to act as an ambassador between the government and gypsies. Mr Codona is also Chairman of the National Travellers Action Group.

The letter read: 'I am offering you my services as a diplomat for the gypsies, so you may sit down with me and discuss gypsy policies and issues, to help make a better future for all gypsies.'

Picture shows Clifford Codona with the delegation.

